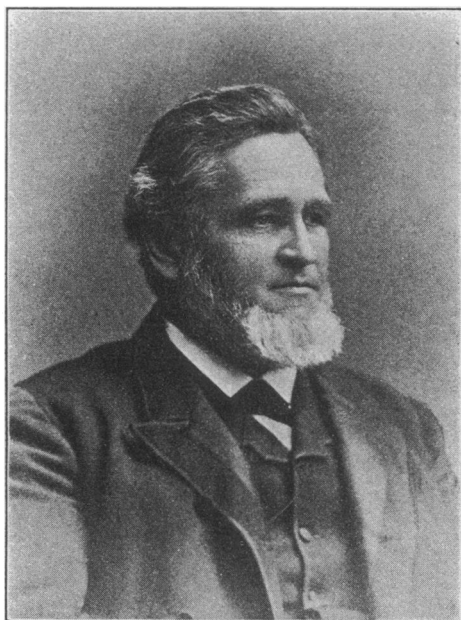# THE

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MATHEMATICAL MONTHLY.

BIOGRAPHY.

PROFESSOR DE VOLSON WOOD.

" PROFESSOR WOOD was a man of wide and enviable reputation. It had been the fortune of many generations of students to sit under his teachings, he had written books which are standard in the technical schools and among engineers, and he had been active all his life in written and spoken discussions before the several societies of which he was a member.   Furthermore, he had personal qualities which impressed themselves promptly and strongly upon those who came in contact with him, and as a consequence of all these conditions he was one of the best-known professors in the United States. But beyond all that lay extraordinary ability as a mathematician and as an analyst, remarkable strength and simplicity of character, and a genius for teaching which made his reputation a good deal more than temporary or local.

        Professor Wood was a man of considerable practical mechanical ability, but that ability had never been turned to very important results.   His powers as a mathematician, however, have given him a permanent place in the literature of engineering, and no student of the higher mathematics of engineering can remain ignorant of the name of DeVolson Wood.   But his real greatness was as a teacher.   In one sense perhaps that is a misfortune for a man, because he leaves no monument except in the hearts and the minds of the men who actually came under his personal influence.   His fame becomes a tradition, fading away and gradually disappearing.   On the other hand, is this not the very best work that a man can do in the world—the work of a really strong and sound teacher ?

James Frijley
De Vasen Hood.

It would be difficult to sum up in a few words all the qualities which made Professor Wood great as a teacher, but the fundamental quality was his own downright sincerity and his faith in his own work ; his mind knew only one test, and that was the truth. To him things were either right or they were wrong, and facts were facts or they were not facts, and he saw no occasion for trying to find any middle ground. But the pursuit of the truth is often enough an arid enterprise, and a man needs more than his own sincerity to get young men to follow him eagerly in that enterprise ; and Professor Wood did get his students to work with alacrity, with eagerness, with enthusiasm. A strong element in this was his own rugged and wholesome enthusiasm ; another was his air. His solid and robust figure, his keen eye and square jaw, his frank and ready smile—all these were part of his influence on the young men. Added to the genuineness which appeared in all his speech and all his manner was a gift of geniality. The youth who came in contact with him could not help feeling that he stood before a real man, a man strong and sound, mentally and physically ; and while youth is not very analytical it is impressed by a man of such quality without knowing why it is impressed. The writer of these words, who had the fortune to sit under Professor Wood four years in civil engineering, can testify that no other teacher ever gave him such hard lessons or ever got out of him so good recitations, and yet there was no sense of hardship in it. It seemed a natural and inevitable thing to work about five times as hard for Professor Wood as for any other teacher, and this perhaps was largely a result of his own enthusiasm in the work. He had furthermore a gift of personal interest in his students. Probably a very small percentage of his pupils—and they must have been unworthy students at that—failed to feel that Professor Wood had a particular personal interest in them. It was not that he took any special trouble with any one man, but he was always able to carry a man's personality in his mind, and he seemed always to be interested in knowing something about a man's career, And so it came about that his influence on the lives of his students did not cease when they left his class-room.

Professor Wood was an active and sincere Christian gentleman, always interested in good work and always exerting a good influence in the community about him. Among a select body of students his name will be known and honored for generations to come as the name of a clear and able writer on the mathematics and mechanics of engineering ; among a great body of teachers, students, engineers, and administrators he is remembered in gratitude and love as a strong and wholesome and stimulating friend." *From the Railroad Gazette of July* 2, 1897.

Professor Wood was born near Smyrna, New York, on June 1, 1832, and died at Hoboken, New Jersey, June 27, 1897. He began teaching in 1849, teaching for three terms in Smyrna. In 1853, he graduated from the Albany State Normal School. During the same and the following year he was principal at Napanoch. He was assistant professor of mathematics in Albany Normal, 1854-5, assistant instructor at the Renselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, 1855-7,

from which he received the degree of Civil Engineer. Hamilton College conferred the degree of Master of Arts in 1859.

At the University of Michigan he was professor from 1857 to 1872, receiving the degree of Master of Science in the second year of his professorship. Through his labors the department of civil engineering was organized. He became professor of mathematics and mechanics at Stevens Institute of Technology, Hoboken, New Jersey, in 1872, and upon the withdrawal of Prof. R. H. Thurston, to become president of Sibley College, Cornell, he became professor of mechanical engineering, which position he was holding at the time of his death.

He was a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers from 1871 to 1885, also of American Association for the Advancement of Science, since 1879, and its vice president in 1885. He was a member of the American Mathematical Society, and of the Society of Mechanical Engineers, and an honorary member of the Society of Architects. He was the first president of the Society for the Promotion of Engineering Education, started in Chicago at the time of the World's Fair.

He was engineer of the ore-dock, Marquette, Michigan, in 1864, and inventor of a steam rock drill and air compressor.

He contributed articles to the New York Teacher, Johnson's Cyclopædia, Appleton's Cyclopædia of Mechanics, the London Philosophical Magazine, Van-Nostrand's, The American Engineer, Michigan Journal of Education, Journal of Franklin Institute, Railroad Gazette, of which his son is now one of the editors ; The Mining and Engineering Journal, Science, The Mathematical Visitor, The Analyst, The Annals of Mathematics, THE AMERICAN MATHEMATICAL MONTHLY, and other magazines.

He was the author of Trusses, Bridges and Roofs, published in 1872, Wood's Edition of Mahan's Civil Engineering, Treatise on the Resistance of Materials, Elements of Analytical Mechanics, Wood's Edition of Magnus' Lessons in Elementary Mechanics, Coördinate Geometry and Quaternions, Key and Supplement to Elements of Mechanics, and to the Mechanics of Fluids, Trigonometry, Turbines, and in 1887 he published one of the greatest of his books, Thermodynamics, which has entered a number of universities and gone through several editions.